

# A PROPOSAL OF UNION

## AMONGST PROTESTANTS,

### FROM THE LAST-WILL

Of the Most Reverend  
Doctor SANDS

Sometime Archbishop of YORK;

(As the Sentiment of the first Reformers)

Humbly presented to the PARLIAMENT.

Right Honourable,

**F**OR the divisions of *Reuben* there once were great thoughts and searchings of heart; and well may there be the like at this day for those among us in *England*, by which, not the *seamless Coat of Christ*, but his *precious mystical Body* is miserably rent and torn in pieces. At this many are exceeding angry (if from a right principle it is well), and complaints do every where abound; But what, ah! what is done in order to a Cure? Some indeed have offer'd at it, but greatly mistaken their way, inflaming the wounds, instead of healing them. Peace with God, and Conscience, and among the Brethren, is that Legacy, which our dearest Lord left unto his Disciples. Cordial and mutual love springing up in all expressions of kindness, is that amiable Badg by which he would have them known in the World. In a word, *Union and Communion* among Christians, is both the beauty and strength of the Church; That renders her *lovely as a City compacted together, and terrible as an Army with Banners*. Hence it is, that our Saviour did so earnestly pray his Father, that his people might be *one, and made perfect in one*; and *Paul* did with utmost importunity press the *Philippians* to have the same love, to be like minded, and of one accord. And oh! that all, upon whom the name of Christ is called, would carefully attend to this Advice, and follow it, keeping *The unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*: For by this means our Church would become a *Paradise*, and *Earth* a kind of *Heaven*.

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To endeavour, and ( by the happy concurrence of a Divine Blessing ) to effect so great and good a work as *unity in the Church, and concord among Christians*, is most worthy of so August a *Assembly* and an *Engli<sup>sh</sup> Parliament*; yea, of such a Parliament as you are, whom we have many and many a year longed for, and do now with our souls rejoyce to see. What doth more nearly concern you, or what possibly can more highly exalt you in the love and esteem of all truly religious and sober persons both in the present and future Generations, than your being instruments in the Divine hand for the undoing of *heavenly burdens*, breaking every *oppressing yoke*, and taking *stumbling blocks* out of the way, that all the Sons and Daughters of *Sion* may worship God in the *Beauties of holiness*, with *one shoulder*, and with *one consent*.

And is not this a time for it? Is not this the time? When can you find a fitter? When can *healing-endavour*s be more in season? Violence of storms should drive the Sheep together. *Desperate Plots*, practices, and attempts of busie and *irreconcilable enemies*, should more closely and firmly unite *jeering fiends*. *Mammon* is at the Gate. The *Pope* and his *Em<sup>per</sup>aries*, the *Jesuits* with their *Assassins*, seek our ruine. They have been long travailling with mischief, and brought to the birth, and were at the very point of bringing forth, had not our Gracious God wonderfully interposed both for discovery and prevention. Oh! Let not *Protestants* devour one another, when their *Pap<sup>al</sup> Adversaries* would devour all; who are not yet satisfied, but as much as ever thirst for blood. Besides, not only the *rage of men*, but the *Rod of God* should teach us peace and quietness. It becomes us to give over our unchristian contentions with one another; seeing God hath with great severity in various ways contended with us all. Sundry years we have been in the furnace of affliction, and should be so thoroughly melted, as easily to run into one: I mean all those in *England* who fear God, and desire to see the King of Saints in his beauty. I know there is an implacable enmity put by God himself between the *seed of the woman*, and the *seed of the serpent*; and as *Luther* saith, *Cain* will murder *Abel* to the end of the world. But many, professing Religion, should be of implacable spirits, resolved to carry their heats and animosities down with them to the Grave, their speedy march off would be a mercy to the Church and Nation, unless God please to mollifie their hearts into a brotherly compliance upon good terms. And blessed be his Name, there is a *cementing, healing spirit* to be found among many, very many in the Nation, who long for peace, and pray for peace, and are most willing to deny themselves, and do any thing for peace, only they dare not forsake *holiness*, neglect their Duty, nor wound their Consciences by offending God: And I doubt not, but many of their Brethren would go far to meet them, and welcome that day, in which all middle-walls of partition shall be broken down. How sweet, how exceeding sweet is that passage lately dropt from the Lip and Pen of that very Learned and Reverend Divine, Dr. Tillotson, Being Brethren upon so many accounts, and by so many bonds and endearments all united to one another, and all travelling toward the same countrey, why do we fall out by the way? Since we are Brethren, why do we not, as becomes Brethren, dwell together in unity?

His Most Excellent Majesty (under whose refrigerating shadow we have enjoyed so much tranquillity) hath made frequent motions for the composing of differences among us; but unto this day, too too few in place and power have written after so fair a Copy, or trodden in the steps of His Royal clemency. He hath now again in His late most gracious Speech to your Honours, propounded *Union* as the end he aimed at, and which, he wisheth, would be extended to *Protestants abroad as well as at home*. A Saying most highly becoming so Great a Prince, & Defender of the Faith, and unquestionably, Chief of the Protestant Party. God grant he may live long, and act vigorously toward the effecting of so glorious a design, that not only we, but the Children yet unborn, may rise up and call him blessed. Most Noble Sirs, give us leave with some confidence to hope, that you are like-minded, and herein will joyn issue with His Sacred Majesty. Among those other weighty and arduous affairs

affairs which will be before you, be pleased, as our great Physicians, to reach out to us an healing hand.

A Divine told us of late, That the Church of England is ready with open arms to embrace those that do dissent; and it may be rationally concluded, that *Dissenters* are full out as ready to be embraced, doubtless those that have been so long under *foot*, and in the *dust*, having very hard measure meted out to them, would gladly be taken up now into the arms, surely such unwonted kindness would fill their mouths with thankfulness, and put them into an extacy of joy, provided there be nothing in the terms to choke them. It is no kindness to *lay* the man, and wound his conscience. May it please you, Right Honourable, with a tender hand, by a safe and right way, to bring them into the bosom of their Mother.

It is not for me, the meanest of ten thousand, to act the *Dictator*; no, no, I will turn *Orator*, and humbly pray, That you may be all taught of God, and endued with a Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, to find out proper and effectual means and methods, for the bringing about this ever-to-be desired harmony and accord among Protestants. Only this I crave leave with all humility and earnestness to beg, That what God hath put up in the Church, may be pull'd down; and those things taken out of the way, which have been, and always will be bones of contention among persons truly learned and good. May that be rejected as an *Innovation*, which is not as old as the *Apostles*, and nothing imposed upon Ministers or People, but what hath footing and warrant in the *holy scriptures*. Oh that all *Dissenters* would come up to the Church of England, as far as ever they can with a good conscience; and oh that they also may be so far condescended to. And certainly it can neither be prejudicial to the Church to yield in those things which (*Dissenters* account sinful, and) she her self calls *indifferent*; and upon that score are at best but *chips in Porridge*; not worth contending for. Nor can it be any unhandsome or dishonourable reflexion upon our first *Renowned Reformers*, whose Memory is deservedly dear to us; for they did famously in this our *Israel*, casting out abundance of *filth* and *rubbish*, laying a good foundation, and making an admirable progress in the *structure*; yet such was the iniquity of the Times, the rage of their Enemies, and the opposition they met with, that they did not, nay they could not finish the work, nor add the *top stone* to the Reformation, but left something for their Successors to do, which are You: the good Lord give you an heart to do it. *Rome was not built*, nor could it be pull'd down in a day, or in an Age.

Since therefore His most Sacred Majesty, (being thoroughly sensible of the great advantage our common Enemy, the *Papist*, hath received by the breaches that have not only been made, but hitherto continued among such as profess the same faith), hath been graciously pleased to recommend to your special care the concern of the *Protestant interest*, as well at home as abroad, and hath commanded the Honourable the Lord Chancellor of England to acquaint you, that he judgeth it a thing necessary for you in your great Wisdom, to find out some way for the relief of such Protestants as do wander only from the Church of England, thorow the tenderness of their consciences, being such as would not destroy it, but do build upon the same foundation with yourselves; I take upon me the humble boldness to offer to your Honours serious Consideration, the *Sentiments*, and very words of one of the very first Reformers of our Church of England, as it remains upon Record, being extracted out of the *Last Will and Testament* of the most Reverend Father in God, *Edward Sands*, late Arch-Bishop of York, being the general sense of the said Reformers, of which you may be more fully satisfied from the words themselves.

Concerning Rights and Ceremonies by Political Constitutions authorized among us: As I am, and have been persuaded, that such as are set down by publick Authority in this Church of England, are no way either ungodly or unlawful, but may with good conscience for order and obedience sake be used of a good Christian (for the private Baptism to be ministered by Women, I take neither to be prescribed nor permitted);



so have I ever been, and presently am persuaded, that some of them be not so expedient for this Church now, but that in the Church reformed, and in all this time of the Gospel, wherein the seed of the scripture hath so long been sown, they may better be dis- used by little and little, than more and more urged. Howbeit, as I do easily acknow- ledge our Ecclesiastical Policy in some points may be better, so do I utterly mislike, even in my conscience, all such idle and undigested platforms as have been more lately and boldly, than either heartedly or wisely preferred, tending not to the Reformation, but to the destruction of the Church of England. The particularities of both sorts re- ferred to the discretion of the godly wise; of the latter I only say this, That the State of a small private Church, and the form of a large Christian Kingdom, neither would long like, nor can at all brook one and the same Ecclesiastical Government. Thus much I thought good to testify concerning these Ecclesiastical matters, to clear me of all sus- pition of double and indirect dealing in the house of God; wherein, as touching mine Office, I have not failed, but walked sincerely according to that skill and ability which I received at Gods mercifull hand, &c.

L. Probatum apud London, &c. Vicesimo Secundo die Mensis Maii Anno Domini Millesimo Quingefimo Nonagesimo Juramento Johannis Theaker Notarii Publici Procuratoris Siciliae Relictae & Executoris, &c. Cui, &c. de bene, &c. Jurat.

Drury, fol. 30.

Marcus Cottle Regist.

I Shall not trouble you with any Observations of mine upon this discourse of that Reverend Person, but submit it to your Honours Judgment, and take further bold- ness to subjoyne a remarkable passage of the truly Worthy and Reverend Dean Til- lerson. viz. It is not for private persons to undertake in matters of public concern- ment; but I think we have no cause to doubt, but the Governours of our Church (not- withstanding all the advantages of Authority, (and we think of Reason too on our side) are persons of that Piety and Prudence, that for peace sake, and in order to a firm Union among Protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things, but to yield them up, whether to the infirmity, or importunity, or perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us. Oh that it may be according to his word; and so I shall most cheerfully yield to him, that, On the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable disposition, and a mind rea- dy to comply with the Church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawful things, and desirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the com- munion of it; a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples: And such I perswade my self all sober and Pious Dissenters will be found.

And now, Right Honourable, I humbly crave your gracious entertainment of these few lines, sent indeed from a mean and unknown hand, but from an heart full-fraught with Loyalty to His Majesty, and dutiful respects to your Honours, and Zeal for the Purity, Peace and Prosperity of the Reformed Church, and particularly that part of it, which Gods right hand hath planted in this famous Island. I shall not sin in ceasing to pray, "That the good hand of God may be upon you, that he would spi- rit, direct, assist and succeed you, that you may be the repairers of our breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in. The Father of mercies, and God of peace grant, that there may be no longer among us the noise of Axes, and Hammers; no more crumbling into parties and factions, no more divisions nor causes of them; but that our English Jerusalem may be as a Bride made ready for her Husband. That upon all our Assemblies there may be a glory, and upon that glory a defence.